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REMARKS

Claim 1 has been amended to more clearly point out the subject matter that Applicants' regard as their invention. As such, claims 1-8 are presently pending.

The Examiner rejected claims 1, 2, 4 and 8 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Schunck in view of Wasala et al. and Roensch.

Applicants' invention, as recited in amended claim 1, is a method of recycling a process condensate stream contaminated with products of a steam reformer in which heat is transferred from a first part of an uncontaminated superheated steam stream to a contaminated condensate stream derived from process condensate of the steam reformer to form a contaminated superheated steam stream and then combining a second part of the uncontaminated superheated steam stream with the contaminated superheated steam stream to form a combined superheated steam stream. At least part of the combined superheated steam stream is combined with a hydrocarbon containing stream to form a hydrocarbon and steam containing process stream as feed to the steam reformer. None of these references taken singly or in the Examiner's rejecting combination disclose Applicants' invention as described above.

In Schunck, a contaminated condensate stream circulates from a heating unit 11 to a moisturizer column 9 having a spray head to form a saturated hydrocarbon stream. In Fig. 3 of Schunck, heat is then transferred to the saturated hydrocarbon stream from a first part of an uncontaminated superheated steam stream through a first heat exchanger 17 and then to the circulating contaminated condensate stream within heating unit 11. A second part of the uncontaminated superheated steam stream 2 is then combined with the heated hydrocarbon and steam containing stream and the resultant stream is fed to a steam reformer.

It is readily apparent that Applicants' invention as recited in amended claim 1 is readily distinguishable from Schunck on several

grounds that include the fact that in Schunck there is no combined superheated steam stream, formed by combining the contaminated superheated steam stream with the second part of the uncontaminated superheated steam stream, that is combined with the hydrocarbon containing feed stream to form the hydrocarbon steam containing process stream as a feed to the steam reformer. Rather, in Schunck, heat is transferred from the first part of an uncontaminated superheated steam stream to a saturated hydrocarbon stream in a heat exchanger 17. Even assuming for the sake of argument that such saturated hydrocarbon stream after having been heated were to be considered the superheated contaminated steam stream, there is no combined superheated steam stream that is ever combined with the hydrocarbon containing stream given that the second uncontaminated superheated steam stream 2 is the next stream in Schunck that is combined to form the feed to the steam reformer.

Roensch adds nothing that would render Applicants' invention recited in claim 1 unpatentable. In Roensch, Figure 3, the process condensate stream is stripped within an evaporative stripping column to remove process contaminates and then combined with well water and sent to a demineralizer train. As indicated in Roensch, this combined stream may be pumped. However, in the present invention as recited in claim 1, the uncontaminated condensate is recirculated to the steam reforming system as make up. It has never been contaminated given that it has been formed by condensing a first part of the uncontaminated superheated steam stream for heat transfer to the contaminated condensate stream. To the extent that the Examiner is applying Roensch solely to claim 2, although Roensch teaches stripping to dissolve gases out of the process condensate stream in a stripping column and then pumping the stream, the resultant column bottoms is still contaminated and could not be used as in Roensch for combination with clean well water

because it would still constitute the contaminated process condensate stream.

Turning next to Wasala et al., Wasala et al. teaches a process wherein process condensate is purified of contaminates by stripping the process condensate with a process steam before it is used in a chemical process. This is entirely contrary to the teachings of Applicants' invention in which it is the contaminated process stream that is in fact utilized as a feed to the steam reformer rather than a purified stream. Hence, Wasala et al. adds nothing that would render claim 1 unpatentable. Assuming that the Examiner is applying Wasala et al. to claim 8, Wasala et al. has no bearing on the patentability of claim 8 given the fact that reported process condensate does not combine in Wasala et al. with a process condensate stream produced from the reformer. Wasala et al. teaches a process of purification of condensate. However, there is no mention that the process condensate is imported from a hydrogen or other synthesis gas plant in column 2, lines 47-50. Rather, while it is stated the process condensate from a hydrogen or other synthesis gas plant, after having been heated is stripped within a stripping tower. In the example in column 3, condensate is heated and fed by a pipeline 6 to the top of the stripping column 1. The process condensate is then stripped of superheated steam flowing in pipe 11. There is no combination of two sources of the process stream as recited in claim 8.

In any event, Applicants submit since claim 1 is in allowable form, claims 2, 4 and 8 should be similarly allowable on the same basis. Additionally, as indicated above, Applicants submit that upon a consideration of the references recited in the Examiner's rejecting combination, such claims are patentably distinguishable from such rejecting combination.

Again, given the fact that claim 1 is in allowable form, Applicants further submit that claims 3, 5, 6 and 7 could be allowable on the same basis as claim 1. As such, the Examiner's rejection of claim 3 under 35

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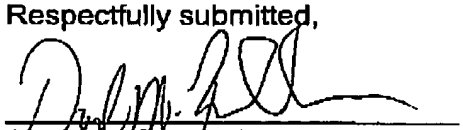
U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Schunck in view of Wasala et al. and Roensch and further in view of Tegge et al.; the rejection of claim 5 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Schunck in view of Wasala et al., Roensch and Erickson; the rejection of claims 6 and 7 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Schunck in view of Wasala et al., Roensch, and Erickson and the rejection of claims 6 and 7 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Schunck in view of Wasala et al., Roensch, Erickson and Drnevich are all rendered moot.

In view of the amendments to the claims and the remarks set forth above, Applicants request reconsideration of the rejection and allowance of all presently pending claims. Since the claims are in condition for allowance, prompt and favorable action is hereby solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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